263 264 with modern machinery. Not content with the state of the utensils in which she serves the meals, the woman is careful to line them at mealtime with fresh and very clean leaves.

515 The natives keep the nails of their hands and feet cut short. The care of the feet is explained as a hygienic measure and by the necessity of taking precautions to avoid the vermin which like to get into these places (ticks). The care of the hands can be explained only by the concern for cleanliness shown in native eating habits.

Imported soap is not yet commonly used, although we found it in a number of native huts.

318 Many native women know how to make soap. The process is very simple. Dried banana skins, trunks of papaw trees, bark, the fruits of various vegetables, and waste from palm nuts are gathered together and burned. The ashes are carefully collected and mixed with some water for boiling them. At the first ebullition, the woman removes the ashes and impurities that [166] rise to the surface. Boiling is then continued until the evaporation is almost complete. When only a thick and sirupy grayish-black deposit is left, the woman takes it off the fire, washes it, and kneads it in cold water until it takes on a clearer color. She then adds palm oil, mixes it in with great care, and puts the lot back on the fire. The paste is stirred all through the boiling, which is continued until the woman obtains a mixture whose consistency is slightly firmer than that of our soft soaps. [Ed., a passage is omitted from mid-page 166 to mid-page 167.]

Native soap is used only in the care of the body.

[302] 303 [167] The native does not merely smear his body with palm oil. The men and especially the women often powder themselves with takula dust. The women prepare a cosmetic with this and love to cover their whole body with it in a spirit of coquetry. This practice is so widespread among the peoples of Lake Leopold II that the manufacture of ngula has become a veritable local industry in certain areas. This is especially true of the Mosengere. In a village near the Songo post, we counted 35 installations for making ngula powder. The simplest set of materials includes two blocks of takula or redwood, a small receptacle containing water, a handful of sand, and a small hand or painting brush. One of the

• 305 blocks is placed on the ground. The woman sits during the work. The second block is placed flat on the top surface of the first, which is moistened and sprinkled with sand. The woman holds the top block in both hands and rubs it back and forth with a rotary motion, taking care to keep the two grinding surfaces wet. The rubbing and the action of the grains of sand as fine graters produce a fine, red, almost impalpable powder mixed with water. The skill in this process consists of proceeding in such a way that the gritty sand is mixed as little as possible with the wood dust. The skill of some persons is so [168] great that one can find hardly any traces of sand in their ngula (1).

[113]

1. On this subject see the monograph on ngula and its manufacture in the Belgian Congo by Dr. J. Maes in the periodical, Congo, 1920 volume.

In the region of the Mongongo, the apparatus for making ngula is usually more elaborate. A thick piece of tree bark is used as a basin. Four or six rather strong sticks are fastened to this basin, and to these the native attaches one of the takula blocks. A special device permits this apparatus to be fastened in place. Some natives even have an improved apparatus set up under a crude shelter in front of their hut, which permits them to make ngula while standing up. Four heavy stakes driven perpendicularly into the ground support a large basin of tree bark 15 centimeters above the ground. [169] One meter from the ground, horizontal crossbars are attached to the forked ends of the stakes, and one of the blocks of takula is fastened to these crossbars. An earthenware receptacle, held in the three forks of a stake driven into the ground beside the apparatus, contains a mixture of water and a small portion of oil. A brush made of a piece of soft wood is immersed in the mixture and permits the craftsman to wet the takula block at will. A small piece of a calabash holds the sand which is rubbed on the wood to grate it to dust. Despite all the skill of the worker, this sand gets mixed into the dust and must be replaced from time to time. The person making

I: Mbere--127 E-5 (1913-1914) 1924 FCSU Mongo FCSU
Ryan-Fox

M
303 the ngula mands before the apparatus. The mixture of water, ngula dust, and a few grains of sand falls into the storage basin as the work progresses. When the stock is large enough, the native plaits small baskets having the shape of a truncated cone and an average capacity of one cubic decimeter. The ngula paste is packed into these baskets, and the lot is then hung under the shelter out of the sun. At the end of a few days the paste is dry. The molded cone of ngula is taken from the mold, wrapped in banana leaves, and

Fig. 92. A Batua Chief Isongo, with a Rope Headdress.

carefully tied with rattan thongs, bamboo splints, or raffia fibers.

M
[303] The family supply is usually left in the storage basins of the devices for making ngula; all the molded cakes are sold at outside markets.

M
303 The baskets used as ngula molds are all plaited in the same
305 way. Four rattan thongs are laid in a row across four others, without being interlaced or plaited at the points where they cross. This forms the bottom of the basket. The thongs are lifted up at the four

L: Mono--138 E-S (1913-1914) 1924 FC32 Mongo FC32
Dungate F816

sides of this square and held in place by a binding of twined raffia fibers. The sides are then plaited by the simplest method, that is, with the horizontal band weaving in and out of the vertical thongs. As all of these molds always have approximately the same height and diameter, the ngula cones are both similar in shape and quite constant in weight. The natives use them a great deal as trade goods. In some regions the ngula cone has become a veritable currency, with a standard value from one tribe to another. [170] A market is organized regularly when merchants call at Mushie, and there the people of the interior exchange the products of their industries for the imported objects brought by the Blacks who work for the Whites. Ngula cones are among the principal items of trade and bring a very high price. In the Otheo region, the old chief Kua Kua was a great ngula trader. He came by regularly with four or five of his wives, bringing various products from the region between the Kasai and the Lubenia to exchange for the ngula made in the Lokaro region.

Throughout the central Congo regions, the ngula used for trade has the shape of an elongated truncated cone. Among the Bawongo-Mono and farther east, on the other hand, ngula most often is shaped in a bell. The native of these regions often uses it to decorate his pottery and wooden objects and to dye the fibers of cloth used for decoration. He keeps it in cosmetic boxes carved from tabola wood and usually decorated with very artistic designs. He also uses it to color his hair. [Ed., a passage from the middle of page 170 to the last paragraph, page 171, is omitted.]

[171] Aside from ngula, the native sometimes smears his body with a type of white clay quite frequently found in the river beds. [172] The native calls it mpembe. Its use is far from being as widespread as that of ngula, and we believe that the native associates it with magic power rather than ornamentation. Mpembe is used chiefly by the peoples of the Congo-Kasai, Lake Leopold II, and Lubenia regions, up to the region of the Bateke.

We never saw a native smear his whole body with it. The few women in mourning that we saw were covered with a grayish-yellow mud and not with mpembe. We believe, moreover, that the use of mpembe is reserved to the chief, his wives, and perhaps